

~~SECRET~~NIO/NE  
INCOMING

25X1

OO RUEAIIB  
 ZNY SSSSS ZOC STATE ZZH  
 STU2008  
 OO RUEHC  
 DE RUEHTV #9201/01 3650918  
 ZNY SSSSS ZZH  
 O 310916Z DEC 82  
 FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV  
 TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0558  
 INFO RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE 1325  
 RUEHBL/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE 1746  
 RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE 4625  
 RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE 8155  
 RUEHJI/AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE 6657  
 RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE 8321  
 RUEHRH/USLO RIYADH IMMEDIATE 3132  
 RUEKJCS/DIA WASHINGTON DC// IMMEDIATE  
 RUSNNOA/USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN IMMEDIATE  
 BT  
 S E C R E T TEL AVIV 19201

EXDIS

MILITARY ADDEES TREAT AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

CINCEUR FOR POLAD

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR  
 TAGS: MOPS, PEPR, IS, SY, XF  
 SUBJECT: DEPLOYMENT OF SA-5'S TO SYRIA

REFS: A. TEL AVIV IS 19052 (NOTAL); B. TEL AVIV IS  
 18882 (NOTAL)

1. SECRET - ENTIRE TEXT.

--

2. SUMMARY: EVEN THOUGH THE SA-5 IS AN OLD ANTI-AIRCRAFT MISSILE SYSTEM, ITS APPARENT PLANNED INTRODUCTION INTO SYRIA (REFS) DEEPLY WORRIES ISRAELI DEFENSE OFFICIALS. SHARON HAS INDICATED THAT HE INTENDS TO RAISE THE ISSUE WITH THE CABINET, AND SHOULD THE MISSILE BE INTRODUCED, HE MAY ARGUE FOR PREEMPTIVE ACTION BEFORE IT BECOMES OPERATIONAL. HE CAN MAKE A REASONABLY CONVINCING ARGUMENT THAT THE INTRODUCTION OF SA-5'S IS A THREAT TO ISRAELI SECURITY. HOWEVER, HIS CABINET COLLEAGUES WILL BE VERY RELUCTANT TO GO ALONG WITH A MILITARY RESPONSE NOW, SINCE A PREEMPTIVE STRIKE COULD LEAD TO LARGE-SCALE HOSTILITIES WITH SYRIA. AFTER THE LEBANON WAR, THE MOOD OF THE COUNTRY AND THE CABINET IS DECIDEDLY AGAINST ANOTHER CONFLICT, ENTAILING EVEN MORE CASUALTIES. CABINET MEMBERS, ESPECIALLY BEGIN, WILL ALSO BE HIGHLY SENSITIVE JUST NOW TO THE AMERICAN REACTION, ESPECIALLY NOW THAT THE TRILATERAL TALKS WITH LEBANON ARE NOW FINALLY UNDER WAY. TO STRENGTHEN THE HAND OF THOSE ALREADY OPPOSED TO ANY RECKLESS PROPOSALS FOR PREEMPTION, WE SUPPORT SHARING

~~SECRET~~

**SECRET**

83 0193478

SSO

PAGE 002

NC 0193478

TOR: 010931Z JAN 83

WITH THE ISRAELIS WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT THIS SYSTEM AND WHAT EFFECTIVE COUNTERMEASURES CAN BE TAKEN IF IT WERE TO BE USED. END SUMMARY.

3. ISRAELI MILITARY INTELLIGENCE AND MOD OFFICIALS HAVE BECOME INCREASINGLY CONCERNED IN RECENT DAYS ABOUT CONSTRUCTION OF SA-5 SITES IN SYRIA (REFTELS). THE POSSIBILITY EXISTS THAT THE ISRAELIS MAY DECIDE TO TAKE PREEMPTIVE ACTION SHOULD THEY CONCLUDE THAT OPERATIONAL SA-5'S ARE ABOUT TO BE DEPLOYED (OUR DAO ESTIMATES SITE CONSTRUCTION COULD BE COMPLETED WITHIN A MONTH). WE HAVE BEEN RELIABLY TOLD THAT DEFENSE MINISTER SHARON HELD A TWO-HOUR MEETING LAST SUNDAY, DECEMBER 26, WITH HIS TOP INTELLIGENCE AIDES TO DISCUSS THE SA-5'S, AND SHARON INDICATED TO FORMER DEFENSE SECRETARY HAROLD BROWN DECEMBER 27, THAT HE WAS READY TO TAKE IT TO THE CABINET FOR DISCUSSION. SHARON, HOWEVER, DID NOT INDICATE WHETHER HE WOULD RECOMMEND PREVENTIVE ACTION BE TAKEN BEFORE THE SITES BECOME OPERATIONAL. EVEN THOUGH THE SA-5'S ARE AN OLD SYSTEM, THEY HAVE NOT BEEN DEPLOYED OUTSIDE OF THE SOVIET BLOC AND THEIR LONG RANGE EXPOSES MUCH OF ISRAEL, INCLUDING BEN GURION AIRPORT, THEREBY THREATENING EVEN CIVILIAN AIRCRAFT. THIS WORRY IS COMPOUNDED BY THE IDF'S PRECEPTION OF ASSAD'S UNPREDICTABILITY. ISRAELI INTELLIGENCE OFFICIALS CLEARLY FEEL THE INTRODUCTION OF THIS SYSTEM WILL ALTER THE POWER BALANCE, (AS WELL AS INCREASE THE RISK TO ISRAEL'S INTELLIGENCE COLLECTION AND EARLY WARNING CAPABILITIES), AND WILL WANT TO EITHER TAKE ACTION DIRECTLY OR AT A MINIMUM INSURE THAT ISRAEL HAS EFFECTIVE COUNTERMEASURES IN ITS POSSESSION.

4. EVEN THOUGH SHARON MAY BE ABLE TO PRESENT CREDIBLE EVIDENCE TO THE CABINET THAT THE MISSILES REPRESENT A NEW AND FORMIDABLE THREAT TO ISRAEL'S SECURITY, HE WOULD HAVE VERY GREAT DIFFICULTY CONVINCING HIS COLLEAGUES TO AUTHORIZE PREEMPTIVE ACTION (IF HE SHOULD CHOOSE TO DO SO). AT LEAST FOR THE TIME BEING. PRIME MINISTER BEGIN AND OTHER CABINET MEMBERS ARE ACUTELY AWARE THAT THE ISRAELI PUBLIC IS DEEPLY WORRIED ABOUT RENEWED HOSTILITIES WITH THE SYRIANS AND THE ENSUING CASUALTIES, WHICH A STRIKE INSIDE SYRIAN TERRITORY WOULD MAKE VERY LIKELY. DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER ERlich TOLD ME DECEMBER 29 THAT A LARGE MAJORITY OF THE CABINET IS ALSO NOW EXCEEDINGLY WARY OF SHARON'S OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE BEIRUT MASSACRE AND OTHER CONTROVERSIAL DECISIONS HE TOOK DURING THE LEBANON WAR. IN ADDITION, MANY CABINET MEMBERS, INCLUDING BEGIN, SHAMIR, AND ERlich, WOULD RESIST ANY MILITARY MOVES THAT WOULD FURTHER DAMAGE AN

EXDIS

ALREADY STRAINED RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES, ESPECIALLY NOW THAT THE LEBANESE TALKS ARE NOW FINALLY UNDERWAY AND WHILE BEGIN IS ANXIOUSLY ANTICIPATING HIS INTENDED VISIT TO WASHINGTON IN FEBRUARY. (SOME CABINET MEMBERS WILL ALSO UNDOUBTEDLY SUSPECT THAT SHARON MIGHT TRY TO USE THIS ISSUE TO DEFLECT ATTENTION FROM POSSIBLY DAMAGING CONCLUSIONS OF THE COMMISSION OF INQUIRY.) EXTRA WARINESS ABOUT HITTING SOVIET-MANNED FACILITIES WOULD ALSO ADD AN ADDITIONAL DETERRENT. FOR ALL THESE REASONS, I AM CONFIDENT THAT IF SHARON WERE TO RECOMMEND PREEMPTIVE ACTION, IT WOULD BE HEATEDLY DEBATED AND SUCCESSFULLY RESISTED, AT THIS POINT.

5. THESE POLITICAL INHIBITIONS AGAINST PREEMPTIVE ACTION COULD WEAKEN ONCE THE FACILITIES BECOME OPERATIONAL. WE THEREFORE URGE THAT WE CONTINUE TO SHARE WHATEVER INFORMATION OUR INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY HAS ABOUT THE SA-5'S AND WHAT EFFECTIVE COUNTERMEASURES CAN BE TAKEN WERE THEY TO BE FIRED. A FORTHCOMING INTELLIGENCE EXCHANGE WILL MATERIALLY STRENGTHEN THE INFLUENCE OF THOSE

**SECRET**

**SECRET**

83 0193478

SSO

PAGE 003

NC 0193478

TOR: 010931Z JAN 83

ISRAELIS WHO ALREADY OPPOSE PREEMPTION.

6. WE SHOULD ALSO BE PREPARED FOR AN ISRAELI DEMARCHE (AS HAS OCCURRED IN SIMILAR CIRCUMSTANCES IN THE PAST) SAYING THAT SYRIA WILL BE CROSSING A "RED LINE" IF SA-5'S ARE INTRODUCED INSIDE SYRIA. THE ISRAELIS COULD VERY WELL ASK THAT WE PASS THIS WARNING TO THE SYRIANS. SAYING THAT IF SYRIA DOES NOT TAKE NECESSARY ACTION, "ISRAEL WILL DO WHATEVER IS NECESSARY TO PROTECT ITS VITAL SECURITY INTERESTS." ON PAST FORM, THIS KIND OF WARNING WOULD BE SHARON'S LIKELY FALL-BACK POSITION. IT WOULD BE WELL TO CONSIDER NOW HOW WE HANDLE SUCH A THREAT IF IT COMES, ESPECIALLY IF WE ARE ASKED, AS IN THE PAST, TO RELAY IT TO DAMASCUS. LEWIS  
END OF MESSAGE

SECRET

**SECRET**